

Presidential Primary Ballot Format Checklist

Overview

The Presidential Primary Ballot Checklist is a resource for election officials who serve voters in Washington State. It was developed for training purposes through the cooperative efforts of state and county election administrators.

This reference tool, in conjunction with the [Presidential Primary Advisory Program](#), provides guidance for formatting ballots and ballot packet materials. It contains citations for the Revised Code of Washington (RCWs) and Washington Administrative Code (WACs).

While the checklist does not contain every ballot requirement or design principle, it does cover specific requirements for Washington's Presidential Primary. Refer to the citations to format envelopes, overall ballot layout, political party ballot format, candidate format, the required insert, alternate ballot types, and additional required instructions.

This informational publication is intended to provide Washington State election administrators a guide to ballot design and layout rules and best practices.

It is the responsibility of the County Auditor to ensure ballots are compliant with all current laws and requirements.

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Overall Ballot Layout

Overall Design | WAC 434-219-155(2), 434-230-012; Presidential Primary 2024 Advisory “Ballot Requirements”

- ☐ 1. Allow instructions to occupy their own column, if space allows.
- ☐ 2. Avoid use of ALL CAPITAL letters, centered type, and using more than one font.
- ☐ 3. If space allows, use a 12-point type. Avoid type size lower than 8-point.
- ☐ 4. Consistent use of shading and/or color.
- ☐ 5. Consistent font and type size for all races.
- ☐ 6. Consolidated ballot layout consisting of main heading, instructions and both party ballots on the same side of paper.
- ☐ 7. Consolidated ballot order – Instructions, Democratic, and Republican.
- ☐ 8. No political party checkbox printed on the ballot.

Main Heading | WAC 434-219-155, 434-230-015(1)

- ☐ 1. County.
- ☐ 2. Date.
- ☐ 3. Presidential Primary.

Overall Instructions; printed on consolidated ballot | RCW 29A.36.161, 29A.56.040; WAC 434-219-155, 434-230-015(1)

- ☐ 1. How to mark a vote on the ballot.
- ☐ 2. How to mark a write-in vote.
- ☐ 3. Refer to insert for detailed instructions on how to vote.
- ☐ 4. Notice in clear, simple language, and printed in large type stating that a ballot with votes for more than one candidate is void. The notice must appear on the face of each presidential primary ballot.

- ☐ 5. Clear delineation between the instructions and the party ballots listing candidates by using white space, illustration, shading, color, symbol, font size, or bold type.
- ☐ 6. Federal Election Commission (FEC) statement printed on consolidated ballot with instructions: "For a list of the people and organizations that donated to Presidential candidates' campaigns, visit www.fec.gov." This statement substitutes the requirement for the Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) statement.

Optional:

- ☐ 1. Print FEC statement on the envelope and in accompanying materials instead of printing on the consolidated ballot with the instructions.
- ☐ 2. Explanation to voter why the ballot voted must be of the same party marked on the envelope.

Instructions; printed on ballot in either overall instructions or in heading of each race | WAC 434-230-015

- ☐ 1. Number of party ballots/candidates the voter may vote (e.g., "vote for only one candidate within the party you marked on your envelope").

Optional:

- ☐ 1. Colors may be used to differentiate between official ballots and provisional or sample ballots.
- ☐ 2. May use instructional graphics provided by OSOS.

Alternate Types of Ballots

Provisional, service, overseas, electronically delivered, on demand, and special absentee ballots | RCW 29A.36.115; WAC 434-230-010

- ☐ 1. Political party declarations must be included on either:
 - a. the return ballot envelope, *or*
 - b. a separate sheet of paper with instructions for the voter to place the signed declaration in the ballot return envelope, but outside of the security envelope.
- ☐ 2. Service and overseas ballots must contain a privacy sheet and instructions for returning the ballot and signed declaration electronically.
- ☐ 3. Provisional and sample ballots must be visually distinguishable from the official ballot.
- ☐ 4. Provisional ballots must be accompanied with information for the voter to find the free access information.
- ☐ 5. Ballots printed on demand by the county or voter are not required to use color for party designation and ballot identification if such a printer is not available.

Political Party Ballot Format

Party Ballot, Office Name | WAC 434-219-155 (2)

- ☐ 1. Candidates of each party must appear in a single column. The list may not wrap to a second column or the next page.
- ☐ 2. "Democratic Party" or "Republican Party" printed immediately above the associated list of candidates.

Optional:

- ☐ 1. Number of party ballots/candidates to be voted (e.g., "vote for one," "vote for one candidate and only within the party you marked," or "vote for only one candidate if declaring with the ____ Party"). This information may also be in the instructions.

Color | WAC 434-219-155 (2)(d)

- ☐ 1. A "Democratic Party" heading within or under a blue shaded bar and a "Republican Party" heading within or under a red shaded bar printed immediately above the associated lists of candidates.

Note: See section "Alternate Types of Ballots" for exceptions to this requirement.

Candidate Format on Ballot

List of Candidate Names | RCW 29A.56.040; WAC 434-219-155(2)

- ☐ 1. For each political party ballot, list candidates together in alphabetical order as certified by the Secretary of State. The Democratic Party's candidates will be listed first; the Republican Party's candidates will be listed second.
- ☐ 2. Print candidates' names in a type style and point size that can be easily read. If necessary, type point size may be adjusted to fit an overly long candidate name.
- ☐ 3. *If requested by a political party:* Include an uncommitted delegate response position (target area) after the list of candidates and above the write-in line.

Additional Required Ballot Materials

Additional Instructions | RCW 29A.36.161, 29A.40.091; WAC 434-219-155, 434-230-015

These instructions may be located on the ballot, on the back of the separate insert, or on the security or return envelopes.

- ☐ 1. How to cancel/correct/change a vote by drawing a line through the text of the candidate's name or ballot response. Graphic is optional. Wording should not require the voter to mark another choice.
- ☐ 2. Notice about overvoting.
- ☐ 3. How to complete and sign the declaration on the return envelope.
- ☐ 4. The option of making a "mark" witnessed by two other people when unable to sign the declaration.
- ☐ 5. How to place the ballot in the security envelope/sleeve, and the security envelope/sleeve into the return envelope.
- ☐ 6. How and where to obtain a replacement ballot if the original ballot is destroyed, spoiled, or lost.
- ☐ 7. Notice that in order to be counted, the ballot must be either postmarked no later than Election Day and arrive the day before Certification Day or deposited at a designated deposit site no later than 8:00 PM on Election Day.
- ☐ 8. How a voter can learn about the locations, hours, and services of voting centers and ballot deposit sites, including availability of AVUs.
- ☐ 9. If FEC statement is not printed on the ballot, it must be printed on the ballot envelope and accompanying ballot materials.

Optional:

- ☐ 1. Any additional information the County Auditor deems necessary.

Ballot Packet Inserts

Required Insert | WAC 434-219-155(3)



1. Instructional insert provided by OSOS (*Ballot Insert Advisory*) explains how to sign and mark the ballot in accordance with the political party declaration.

Optional:



1. Additional information may be printed on the opposite side of the required insert.

Envelopes

Outer Mailing Envelope | WAC 434-230-015

- ☐ 1. County election office address.
- ☐ 2. Display the elections logo according to [“Official Elections Mail – Graphic Guidelines and Logos” Publication 631 Jan. 2022](#).

Optional:

- ☐ 1. Additional instructions and/or county branding provided it does not interfere with the voter declaration format.
- ☐ 2. Label security envelope or sleeve.

Return Envelope – Postal Address Side | RCW 29A.40.091; WAC 434-230-140, 434-230-145

- ☐ 1. A hole punched in a manner that will reveal whether a ballot is inside.
- ☐ 2. Conform to postal regulations.
- ☐ 3. Display the elections logo according to [“Official Elections Mail – Graphic Guidelines and Logos” Publication 631 Jan. 2022](#).
- ☐ 4. For return postage, use the federal postage-paid indicia as authorized by 39 USC 3406 using the DMM 703.8.0 permit.

Optional:

- ☐ 1. County branding provided it does not interfere with the voter declaration format.
- ☐ 2. Label return envelope.

Return Envelope – Voter Declarations, Template | WAC 434-230-015, 434-230-130

- ☐ 1. Required format designated by the Office of the Secretary of State’s template (*Return Envelope Declaration Template Advisory* issued with the official certified party declarations).
Resize format only to accommodate county mailing needs. Contact the Office of the Secretary of State to approve changes to the template.
- ☐ 2. Official designated colors for party check boxes.

Exception: On-demand printing and web-delivered envelopes are not required to use color on party declaration checkboxes.

- ☐ 3. Conform to postal regulations.

Optional:

- ☐ 1. County branding or logo may be used, provided it does not interfere with the Office of the Secretary of State or USPS requirements.
- ☐ 2. Label return envelope.
- ☐ 3. Provide instructions on how to complete and sign the declaration on the return envelope.